



George Washington Carver National Monument VIP Newsletter

Volume 2 Issue 1

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Inspiration is never at variance with information; in fact, the more information one has, the greater will be the inspiration.

George Washington Carver, Letter to the Editor, NY Times, Nov. 24, 1924

RANGER'S REPORT

The end of 2016 meant the annual Volunteers In Parks report was compiled. One word sums up the VIP program at George Washington Carver National Monument (GWCA) during 2016: **outstanding!** With **480 VIPs** (a 30% increase) who provided a total of **8,372 hours** of service (15% increase), the National Park Service Centennial year was a success at GWCA. The entire park staff extends gratitude and appreciation to you!

The tremendous growth of the program is due in large part to several one-day service opportunities, a popular form of volunteering for groups. Youth were especially well-represented during these service days, with 190 youngsters from Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, Upward Bound, a high school stream team, college students earning community service hours, local university students serving as judges for the Art and Essay contest, an alternative high school, and Summer Junior Rangers.

VIPs were vital to helping the park accomplish Centennial goals, including the fourth grade Art and Essay Contest with the theme "I found my favorite national park", and the special events Art in the Park, Carver Day, and Prairie Day. Prairie Day set a one-day visitation record, with over 2,200 visitors.



The park hosted a Centennial BioBlitz in May 2016, attracting nearly 30 new VIPs. Dr. Ioana Popescu's vascular plants team is pictured.



Park staff stayed busy during school spring and fall field trip seasons, serving about 15,000 students. Special thanks go to the park's VIP Education Program Providers: **Denise, Cathy, Chuck, Dave, Gayle, Phil, Cecilia.**

Editor: VIP
Dayan Edwards

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RANGER'S REPORT *continued*

There were several new faces in the VIP program. Park maintenance staff welcomed VIP **Sam** to the facilities and grounds crew. He mowed and trimmed the manicured lawns and helped with landscaping. Holly worked as a natural resources intern, as she worked on her biology degree from Missouri Southern State University. Data she collected, including water quality data, will be valuable as future park managers make decisions about natural resource initiatives.



The Historically Black Colleges & Universities Internship (HBCUI) Program is a National Park Service (NPS) program initiated by the Washington Office of the NPS. It was developed to link college students attending Historically Black Colleges and Universities to NPS sites and units that focus on the African American experience and culture.

The park hosted two interns with the program this year. Abby, a student at Tennessee State University, gained experience as an Environmental Management Intern. Sarina, a student at Spelman College in Atlanta, gained experience as a Museum Collections Intern.



FEATURED VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

The continued success of the VIP program is possible only with your help. Please consider how you may contribute – your talent, enthusiasm, and experience are needed! Let friends and family members know about our volunteer opportunities. We are currently recruiting VIPs for the following jobs and events:

- **Education Program:** program leaders, once or more a month during fall and spring field trip seasons
- **Art and Essay Contest:** art show preparers and art judges the week of February 27th and essay judges on March 14th from 4-6 p.m.
- **Art in the Park:** plein air artists, art workshop leaders, and event assistants, Saturday, April 22nd, 10-3

Contact any of the park rangers for additional information at gwca_interpretation@nps.gov or 417-325-4151.

VOLUNTEERING AS A CAREER

By Raelene Crotser



In October I was asked to write a piece about being a volunteer storyteller and what volunteering in general means to me. Looking back, I was surprised to see I have been a volunteer for around 30 years. As for being a storyteller, I've admitted being a storyteller for ten. But the truth is, like many people, I didn't realize I've been telling stories most of my life.

My volunteering has evolved over the past three decades. What started as a way to gain free admission to various events for my daughter and me, has now become my passion. It's fortunate that so many places need volunteers because, when boredom kicks in, I simply look around to see what looks interesting and then ask about volunteer opportunities. I have never been turned down.

As a volunteer, I have worked for museums, historic sites, county fairs, libraries, and various organizations. In the course of my duties I have met people from all over the U.S. and several foreign countries (perfect for an armchair traveler). I have had folks of all ages and nationalities thank me for spending my time doing what I do best – talking. I've watched the eyes of young and old alike change from "this is going to be so boring" to "wow, I didn't know that." These things can lift your spirits and add meaning to your life. As a retired person, I find volunteering keeps me from retreating from the world and indulging in self-pity "because no one needs me." Nothing could be further from the truth: Volunteers have always been needed and will continue to be valued in this fast-paced world.

In 2015, I received a call from Diane who asked if I'd like to be a storyteller for Prairie Day. Without thinking I said, "Sounds like fun. I'll do it." I've always spoken first and thought later. After getting the details and hanging up, I realized my mistake. I'm a traditional storyteller. However, Diane was referring to interpretive storytelling which is new to me – plus I knew nothing about George Washington Carver. I thought about canceling, but my daughter gave me an incredulous look and said, "Seriously?" After much discussion and going to the library for research material, I ended up having a wonderful experience. It was so much fun that I spent the next year hoping they would ask me back. Telling stories, swapping history trivia and educating people while riding in a horse drawn wagon is the perfect event for a storyteller who enjoys "goobering around." And, if you want to know what that means, come listen to me on Prairie Day 2017. I'm already looking for ways to improve my Prairie Day stories.



I feel anyone with spare time on their hands should give volunteering a try, but be forewarned: It's both addictive and fun.

VIP SPOTLIGHT:

CATHY MYERS – EDUCATION PROGRAM PROVIDER

Cathy joined the Volunteers In Parks program at GWCA in February of 2016. Her primary duties are leading curriculum-based education programs at the park – guided tours and classroom lessons. Cathy recently completed her career as a classroom educator and stays busy with six grandsons! She sat down for an interview with one of the park rangers.

Cathy, you are a busy person! Why did you decide to volunteer for the National Park Service?

My good friend, Denise, recommended it. I may be a little selfish but I miss teaching students. I really enjoy the children on school field trips, and I like to share the Carver story with them and see their excitement.

How do park visitors benefit from your volunteer service?

I believe that young people need to know local history, lessons to learn in their own backyard. With the flora and fauna to help talk about history, it is like when I was a child talking with my grandfather. Kids may be missing out on that and need a sense of what the past was like. We're getting further away from the 1830s. Also, I want people to know about this place and George Washington Carver and what a great American he was.

How do you benefit from volunteering at George Washington Carver National Monument?

I did not realize the full impact of what a special place this is for people to know about. With all the social strife in the United States, George Washington Carver would have a good perspective. He was never bitter. He put others first, served others, and showed that everyone mattered.

Is there anything else you would like to share?

I will finish up with a story about a neat thing that happened to me. I was recently leading a group of students during their field trip and thought their teacher looked familiar. Finally we both realized she had been a student in my class during my very first year of teaching fourth grade! Now I am retired, she is the teacher, and I was leading her school group!

What do you do just for fun and relaxation?

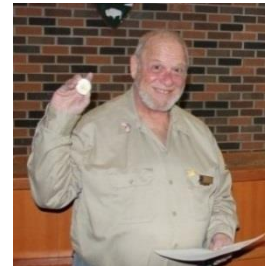
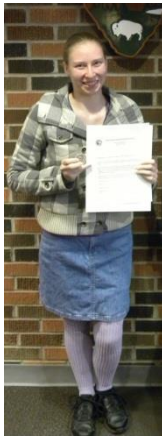
When I'm not working at GWCA or the Powers Museum in Carthage, I love to go to coffee shops like Starbucks and sit down, relax, drink good coffee, and read a good book.



CENTENNIAL VOLUNTEER CHALLENGE

Late in 2015, the National Park Service issued the Centennial Volunteer Challenge. Each VIP who provided 201.6 hours of volunteer service during 2016 would receive the Centennial Volunteer Challenge Coin along with a letter of appreciation from Jonathan Jarvis, Director of the National Park Service.

We are pleased to announce the award recipients. Congratulations go to visitor greeters Penny, Mike, Rose, Phyllis, Holly, and Matthew. Their cumulative service totals an amazing **1,921 hours!** Thank you all for making significant contributions to this national park. You inspire all of us.



UPCOMING SPECIAL EVENTS AT GWCA

Coffee With Carver: February 16 (The Usefulness of All Things) and March 16 (Carver's Bulletins: Some Choice Wild Vegetables), 10:00 a.m.

Art Show/Essay Display: March 6 – 25, 9:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.

Art and Essay Awards Ceremony: March 25, 2:00 p.m.

Art in the Park: April 22, 10:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Check out our [Quarterly Calendar of Activities](#) for weekend programs.
Like us on Facebook to stay up to the minute on park happenings!
Please visit the park's digital media sites: [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [YouTube](#).

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